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Shodan 1949

2 dan 1950

3dan 1951

4 dan 1953

5 dan 1955

6 dan 1961

7 dan 1977

In 1953 he took first place in the second division of the Oteai, (the professional ranking tournament), and in 1965 and 1966 he was runner-up in the Kodansha Tournament (a competition among 5- to 7-dan professionals). In 1967 he won the Takamatsu-no-miya Prize.

He is known for his steady style of play and accuracy at calculation. He is still active in the amateur go world, where he has many contacts, and is the author of several go books.

Also available in English is *Kage's Secret Chronicles of Handicap Go*

LESSONS IN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF GO

by

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PREFACE

'If you want to get stronger, read this book.' This call is addressed to a wide range of go players, from beginners who have barely learned the rules to experts with dan rankings. In the following pages I bequeath to the world the essence of all the experience and knowledge that seven years as an amateur and twenty-two more as a professional have given me.

The book's main themes are the importance of fundamentals, the philosophy of go, and how to study. All I ask is that the reader not do anything so foolish as to finish it in one day. It should be read deliberately, a chapter a day at the fastest, and a fortnight to finish the whole book. If the reader will then spend another fortnight rereading it and learning from it as he would from a good instructor, I think I can promise that he will surmount the barrier of his present rank.

Toshiro Kageyama
Summer, 1970

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Chapter 1

Ladders and Nets

INTRODUCTION

The wish to become stronger — half a stone stronger, one stone stronger — is shared by all lovers of go, amateur and professional alike, regardless of their rank. It is one manifestation of human spirit and ambition, which continue until death. There is a difference, however, between amateurs and professionals. To put it simply, amateurs play at the game; professionals labor at it. Once it was thought that this put amateurs and professionals on parallel tracks that never met — that amateurs could not even approach the professional level. Nowadays, however, the great surge in the size of the go-playing public has narrowed the distance between the tracks and even made them tangent. Already there are, among the top class of amateurs, those who can acquit themselves quite well on even terms against professionals. This serves to point up how go is flourishing.

But these are only a special few, chosen out of a mass of millions. Almost all the rest seem to remain far below where they would like to be, despite their hardest efforts to improve.

What should one do to become stronger at go? This must be something that every go enthusiast wants to know. I can recall many times that I have been asked this question. The real answer may be that there is no single, definite answer, but saying that amounts to saying nothing. I always wanted to answer the question, but it seemed impossible to deal with in a few words. I wanted to try writing a book, one about which I could boast, 'If you want to get stronger, read this.' Now that I have the chance to do so, I am thrilled at the prospect of taking all of my own experience and distilling it into one volume to offer the world.

After you have learned the rules, your first step should be just to play for a while, and by 'a while' I am not referring to any length of time, but rather a number of games, say fifty or a hundred. During this period, if you see an enemy stone, try to capture it, try to cut it off. If you see a friendly stone, try to save it from capture, try to connect it. Concentrate on this alone as you build up some practical experience. There is a saying about being 'tempered in a hundred battles.' You cannot expect to do all your studying and gain all your knowledge from books. I would like to recommend that you play according to your own ideas, with an open mind. If possible, choose other beginners as your opponents. If you are to learn go, open-mindedness is the most important thing.

Next, although it depends on the individual, in my experience you will encounter four barriers: at 12–13 kyu, at 8–9 kyu, at 4–5 kyu, and at 1–2 kyu. You are at a barrier when your strength ceases to rise and you find yourself playing for fun, as an exchange of ideas — any opponent

will do. Studying books gets you nowhere. The thickness of these barriers varies from person to person. Some break through them easily. Some do not. I know that there are many who spend morning to evening every day in go clubs, playing tens of games a day, but make no progress. No matter how ardent their will to learn was at the beginning, let this condition continue for two or three months, not to mention one or two years, and hope is abandoned. The player comes to recognize himself as 'a permanent 6 kyu' and everyone else does too.

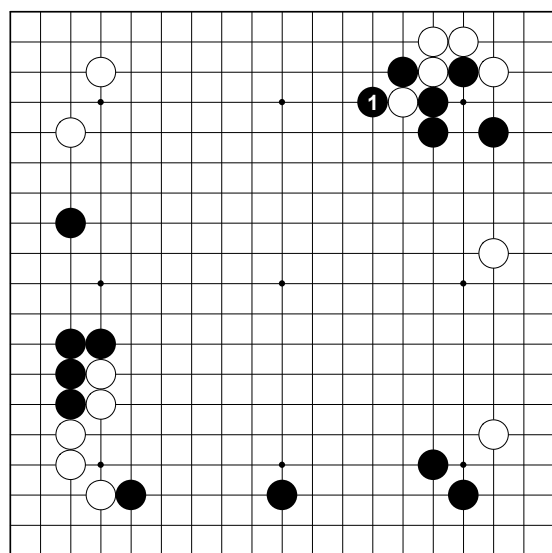
This condition is unbearable, yet how many go players find themselves in it? Almost all? If so, it would be a crime just to let them go on as they are, and that is why I am writing this book — to explain in detail what is needed to break through the barriers. I feel that what I have to say will be most welcome news to those who do not know what to study, or how to study it.

Of course one cannot make progress in any discipline without effort. 'There is no pleasure without pain.' Pleasure is progress, and pain the pain of effort. Study in the wrong way, however and the result may be just pain with no pleasure at all. One must, without fail, learn the correct way to study.

Ladders

Still on ladders? Ridiculous! Even looking at this page is beneath me.

Yes, but even if you feel you are being cheated, read on a little further. Don't forget the fundamentals. Our study begins with ladders.

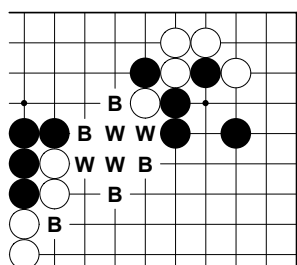
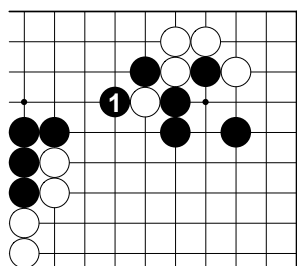


fundamentals. Our study begins with ladders.

Dia. 1 (the opening of an even game). The outcome of this game hangs on whether or not Black can capture the white stone in the ladder that starts with 1. Many amateurs, sometimes even dan-ranked amateurs, are apt to become impatient when confronted with long ladders like this and resort to stooping down and Sighting diagonally or running their fingers zigzag across the board, or in extreme cases to arguing their opponents into submission verbally. All this I find a bit silly.

When the ladder becomes slightly difficult like this, there is a widespread tendency to give up, and wonder if there is not something like a triangle theorem, some mechanism one can apply and get the answer instantly. If you want to create such a thing it is not much trouble to do so, but having it will only prove destructive to your game.

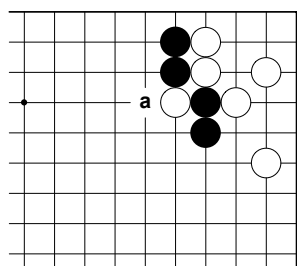
Some will say, 'Phooey, that much I know already; it's just that it's too much bother actually to do it.' Others will say, 'Look, I'm still weak at the game; I can't do anything difficult like reading.'



Dia. 2. Well then, how about this diagram? Can Black capture this stone in a ladder? Without laying the stones on the board, can you follow this out — white, black, white, black — to the very end by eye alone? What is your conclusion?

Dia. 3. Black grips the white stone, White escapes, Black blocks in front of him, White escapes, black, white, black, white, black, and there White loses seven stones. See? You *can* read it. Look at *Dia.* 2 once again — black, white, black, white — you *can* read it. Again! Do some repetition practice. When you feel secure, move the left-hand bunch of black and white stones a line, or two lines, or three

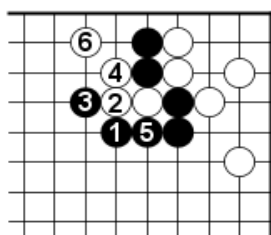
This exercise will teach you a valuable reward: the confidence that you can read any ladder anywhere, anytime. This confidence heralds your next big stride. A great many people have broken through their barriers by sticking persistently to this method of mine. Habit is a frightening thing. Keep at it every day, and soon the ladders that used to plague you will become the easiest things in the world to read out. You will not have the slightest difficulty reading out a straight ladder like the one in Dia. 1 in a few seconds — a superhuman feat to anyone who does



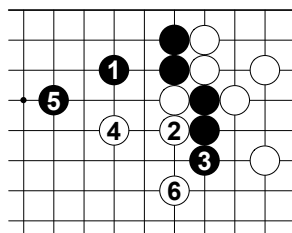
Dia. 4. Black to play. Obviously if the ladder works he should play 'a', but what should he do when the ladder does not work? This may give one pause.

Dia. 5. In certain circumstances a shoulder play like Black 1 is effective, but here White comes out with 2 to 6 and Black accomplishes nothing.

Dia. 6. Locally, one's first instinct is to jump out to Black 1, but after White 2 to 6 Black's three stones are in a very tight spot. This is no good either.

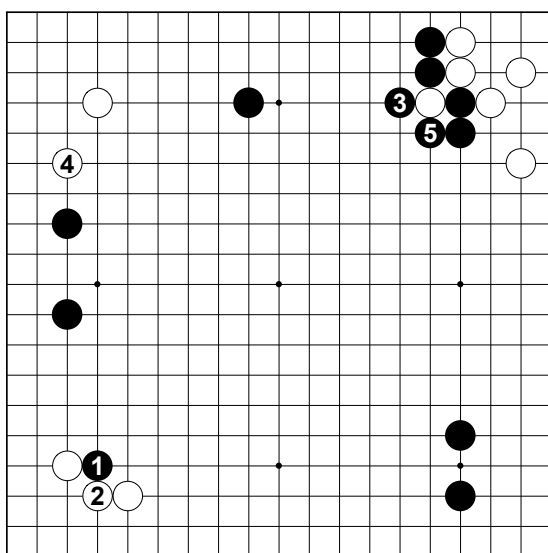


Dia. 5

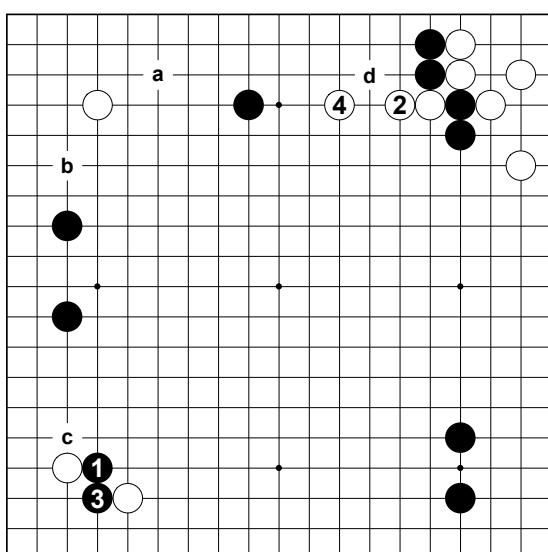


Dia. 6

White has to defend at 2, and now the question is whether the ladder works or not. Well?



Dia. 7



Dia. 8

Dia. 7. Let's look at the whole board. If the formation in the upper right corner occurred in this opening, what should Black do? How about playing a ladder block at I? Locally, at least,

Answer: given the exchange of Black 1 for White 2, Black can capture White in a ladder. Naturally Black has to have anticipated White 2 and read out that the ladder at 3 works before he plays 1. Next White shifts to 4, or to some such point. Here Black captures at 5. This is important. I imagine there are those who think Black ought to wait until the ladder becomes broken and then capture, but that is the shallow thinking of an amateur. Black 5 is the proper time to capture; to leave this move unplayed and turn elsewhere would be like trying to run a business while in debt. That would give me, at least, a very uneasy feeling. Of course if you ask how a person who is afraid of going into debt can run a business anyway, I will have to confess that I have little experience in that line, so I cannot really say anything, but still.

Dia. 8. To go back to the moment when Black 1 definitely establishes the ladder, is there not the danger that White will ignore I and resist with 2? Depending on the situation, this is naturally a possible move. In this game,

however, it is not one that White should adopt. Given Black 'a', White 'b', Black 'c' after White 2 and 4, Black has decidedly the better position.

But if Black were to switch and answer White 2 at 'd', letting White play 3, he would have had his way in neither the upper right nor the lower left corner. Irresolution is a vice.

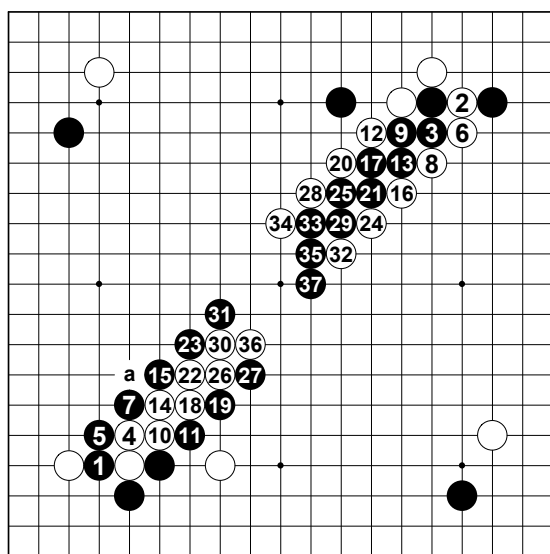
There are various other things to be said about ladders, but the main point is that they branch into no variations, so don't be lazy — practice reading them.

Occasionally some periodical proudly announces that it has discovered a shortcut to reading ladders — some worthless white elephant with four or five dotted diagonals and heavy black lines. Even if you could understand it, it would not do your game the least good. Such things are ridiculous.

One hardly ever hears of a professional misreading a ladder, but there was a famous tragic case around 1925 where one side misread a ladder in the opening, played it out for about three stones, realized his error, and resigned at barely the thirtieth move. Don't make light of ladders. Those who laugh at them will weep later.

Next I would like to show you an unusual game with simultaneous ladders.

Dia. 9. Perhaps you think that this sort of thing would never happen in a good game, and are

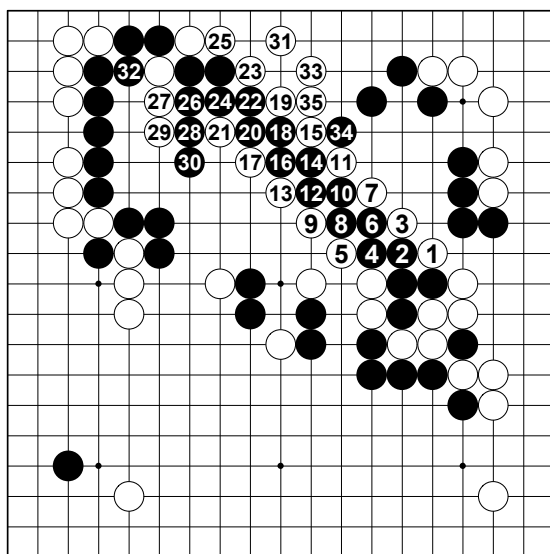


Dia. 9

wondering what kind of duffers Black and White were, but this sequence occurred in a game between Hosai Fujisawa, 9-dan (white) and Masao Sugiuchi, 9-dan (black). It comes from the first Meijin League, over a decade ago. Imitative play — White 2 etc. — is Fujisawa's specialty, and it can lead to extraordinary happenings like this, even at the highest professional levels. Of course if one side could first escape, then capture the other, he would win hands down, but it was because both sides had read out that this could not happen that the game ended up as shown.

Since it is bad to chase the enemy in a ladder that does not work, we can understand Sugiuchi's reasoning; when he escaped with 37 White had chased him one stone farther (White 34) than he had chased the white group in the lower left. We can also understand the reasoning of Maeda, 9-dan, the observer, who pointed out that since White was able to start in first on the double atari points like 'a', he was not necessarily worse off. At any rate, this game will probably go down in the annals of professional play as an all-time freak.

Dia. 10. This next curiosity is of a player deliberately chasing his opponent, not in a ladder that he had misread but in a ladder he knew ahead of time would fail. It comes from the elimination



Dia. 10

rounds of the Nihon Kiin Championship (January, 1970): Kudo, 8-dan (black) vs. Kageyama, 6-dan (white). My plan was to make use of White I etc. to live on the upper side. In a post-game discussion that was joined by Rin Kaiho and others it was decided that instead of White I, just White 23, Black 22, White 19, Black 3 (stopping the ladder), White 24, Black 20, White 25, Black 26, White 31 would have been a better way to live. I chose the ladder sequence because it was unbranched, easy to understand, and left the lead unclear, but perhaps what was

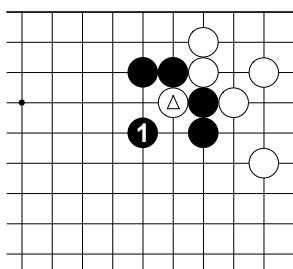
unclear was not so much the lead as my vision in judging it. I lost by resignation.

No doubt the first requirement for becoming strong at go is to like it, like it more than food or drink, and a second requirement is the desire to learn. A third requirement is to study it, using proper methods, patiently, little by little, without cramming. Ask dan-level amateurs and you will find that they did not become stronger just by playing their opponents for fun. Each one kindled the desire to learn more, and put in no small amount of time studying. Each one will have a few tales of hardship along the way to tell. Rome was not built in a day. It may not take years of devoted study to the exclusion of all else, but it does take effort piled upon effort to become strong at go. The only ones who fall by the wayside are those, be they gifted or otherwise, who forget the word 'effort'.

Nets

What comes after ladders? Why, nets of course — what else? The two are like brothers. They are the basic ways of capturing stones. One of the precepts I always teach beginners is, 'When it looks as if you can capture something, hold up two fingers and ask yourself two questions: (1) Can I catch it in a ladder? (2) Can I catch it in a net?' The Japanese term for a ladder is 'shicho', which is a slurring of 'shitsuyo ni ou', meaning 'pursue doggedly'. The origin of the Japanese term for a net, 'geta', takes a well-fortified imagination to understand. Literally 'geta' means

'wooden clog', a common type of foot wear in Japan, and if you can see that in the four black stones in Dia. 1, then White's Δ stone becomes the foot and Black 1 the thong that keeps the foot

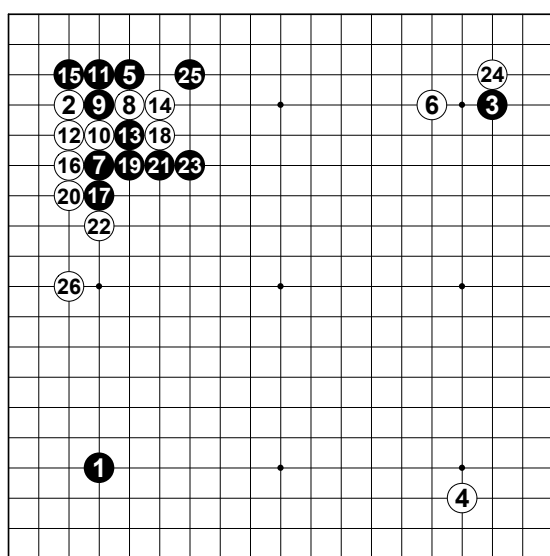


Dia. 1

from escaping. Playing Black 1 completes the picture of the 'geta'. These are my own private etymologies for the two terms, but don't you agree that they fit quite well?

I dare say everyone would play Black 1 in Dia. 1 and capture the stone by netting it. Another possibility would be to capture it in a ladder, if the ladder was working; that would do the job, but sooner or later Black would have to play another stone and capture it completely, or else face a ladder block. In other words, the net captures with one stone, while the ladder would require two. This is the main reason why nets are better than ladders.

Next I would like to show you an example of a net from actual play. In 1966 I became the final recipient of the Takamatsu-no-miya Prize. I had white in the deciding game against T. Kajiwara and countered his taisha joseki opening with a new move.



Dia. 2

Dia. 2. Kajiwara followed one of his favorite variations from Black 7 to the extension at 17. I answered by departing from the joseki ('a') at 20 and trotting out my new hane at 22. The next day I discussed this move with T. Yamabe, 9-dan. Yamabe: 'How could anybody be so dumb as to hane at 22 and let Black extend to a point like 23? And whatever possessed you to ignore this and play White 24? All I can say is I'm astounded at you.' He and I have always been on informal terms, and he always speaks bluntly, even if I do not. Kageyama: 'I thought I was getting a pretty

good result when I played White 26, and Hashimoto (Utarō of the Kansai Ki-in) genuinely admired my moves.'

Yamabe: 'That just proves you can't tell when he's being sarcastic; and speaking of White 26, that narrow extension was too miserable for words. Once you let Black take a prime point like 23, the game is over; there's no question about it. I know Kajiwara lost, but the way you play is so asinine that it makes your opponents light-headed, that's all.'

Now that I set these words down on paper and reread them, they sound almost insulting, so let me make it clear that for the sake of the art, strong and outspoken language, which makes a deep

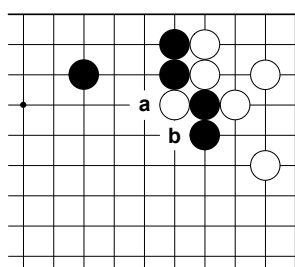
answered 'a'. What about professionals? They held Black 1 to be so natural and obvious that the question was not worth discussing. I found this extremely interesting.

A beginner would probably play Black 1 in high spirits, rejoicing at having found a way to capture the three white stones. That is, the beginner's move would be the same as the professional's (although they would be thinking differently). A stronger amateur would glare at the position and play Black 'a', for a larger capture. A professional, however, would find the threat of White 'c' after Black 'a' disquieting, regardless of whether it works immediately or not. To him Black 1 would be the natural and proper move, the only move to make.

Black 1 or Black 'a'? Only an amateur would ask himself this question. A professional would simply dismiss the issue. Neither the intuitive school nor the profit school would give it a second thought. Here we can see another difference between amateur and professional.

That is what I say now, but what was I thinking during the game? To be honest, I was expecting Black to play 'a', which means that if it had been me, I might have played 'a' myself. I even felt a little grateful to Kajiware for playing Black 1. As time went on, however, I began to realize the virtues of Black 1.

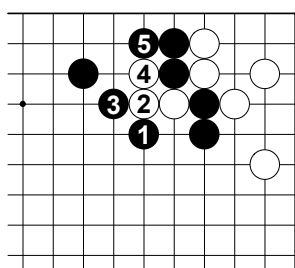
Faithfulness to the fundamentals is something that becomes second nature to a professional. Call it a matter of training if you will, but what changed me from an amateur into a professional was getting a really firm grip on the fundamentals. Yet here I am, twenty years later, and I still have



Dia. 4

not acquired this one fundamental. 'The amateurish professional' — that's my other name. I am not bragging about this or feeling smug. I want to become a 'professional professional', even if it takes me the rest of my life.

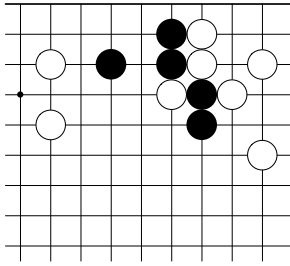
Dia. 4. Black, for whom the ladder is on, is asking himself, 'Should I grip the white stone with 'a', or not?' Let's answer him. 'If you play 'a', you'll have to add another stone at 'b'. If you can finish capturing White with one move, why look for anything better?'



Dia. 5

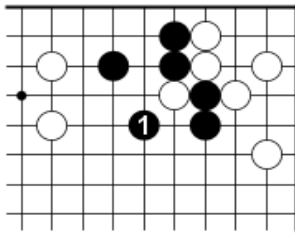
Dia. 5 (correct). Black nets White with 1, White 2 etc. show that escape is impossible. Black 1 captures White with one move, that is, it is more efficient than Black 'a' in the previous diagram. This is the main reason that it is correct. Neither this diagram nor Dia. 3 looks very much like a wooden clog, so my etymology for the term

'geta' begins to seem suspect. Surely it did not come from English, a play on the phrase 'get her', but K. Kodama, 5-dan, has a theory that it is derived from a similar witticism in Japanese, and he is probably right.



Dia. 6: Problem 1

Dia. 6. Problem 1. Black to play — what should he do?



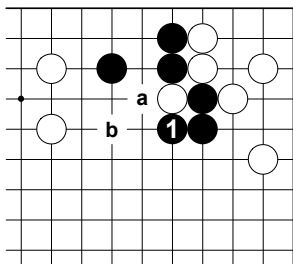
Dia. 7

Dia. 7. I dare say this will be the most common answer. 'You mean it's wrong?'

'That's right, it's wrong.'

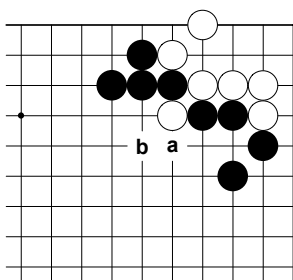
'Look, you can't be trying to tell me to capture the stone in a ladder.'

'God forbid the thought, but look at Dia. 8. You have this option here too. It's the kind of move that's easy to overlook.'



Dia. 8

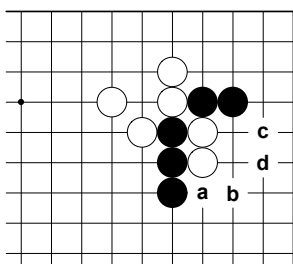
Dia. 8. The atari at 1 is the correct answer. If White comes out at 'a', Black nets him with 'b'. Of course Black 1 in Dia. 7 captures White just as surely, but when there are two ways to capture with one move, the firmer way is correct. It's worth reflecting upon the value of the firmness of Black 1 in Dia. 8.



Dia. 9: Problem 2

Dia. 9. Problem 2. Black to play — should he capture with 'a' or 'b'? Both plays do the job in one move, but one is quite clearly better than the other.

The correct answer is Black 'a'. If White tries to get out, Black can net him, and if White keeps trying to get out, Black has a squeezing tesuji (page 211). The reason Black 'a' is better than Black 'b' is the same as in the previous problem.



Dia. 10: Problem 3

Dia. 10. Problem 3. Black to play. How should he capture the two white stones? If you got the first two problems right and slip up on this one, you did not really understand the first two, for this is just an application of them. The answer is restricted to two points, 'a' and 'b'. Which? The answer is 'a'. If White tries to escape at 'c', Black stops him at 'd'.

Dia. 12. Problem 5. Black to play. Can he capture the three white stones? We are getting into

Dia. 12: Problem 5

Dia. 13. Black 1 and 3 are good style, but they are the wrong answers to Problem 4. In this

Dia. 14

Dia. 15. Black 1 and so on, which are the answer to Problem 5, have to be thoroughly read out

Dia. 16

When it looks as if you can capture something, hold up two fingers and ask yourself: (1) Can I catch it in a net? (2) Can I catch it in a ladder? This is one of the first things taught in a beginner's manual, but that does not mean that a stronger player can afford to forget it. The

reason that so many people never master this elementary skill is that they keep ignoring it as being beneath them. They are the people who cannot be bothered to 'read'; who try to capture the uncapturable group because it just looks as if it can be done or because they figure they can muddle through somehow, and so they rush headlong into disaster. They are also the people who, when they face a slightly stronger opponent, do not try to capture the capturable group because with their fuzzy reading they are afraid of messing it up; who innocently add unnecessary stones to their own already alive groups; who take fright without cause; who tremble when they sit down at the go board; who play through the whole game with a sullen expression; who lose every fight; who eventually come to hate go. Sorry wretches, through choice they have abandoned the most interesting and enjoyable of all games.

No matter what age he is, a man's brain cells are sharpened and work better the more he uses them. Go is perfect mental exercise. It is worth a few leisure moments. Think of it, if you like, as the game that prevents brain degeneration.

Chapter 2

Cutting and Connecting